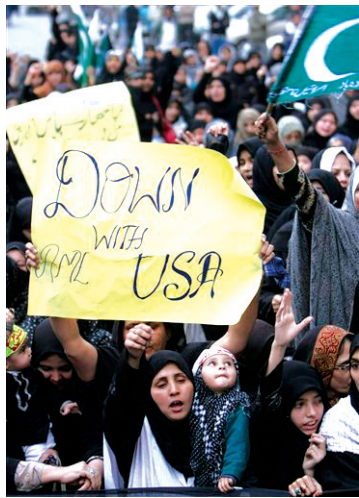


INSIDE TODAY

WORLD NEWS

SHIITE BOMB



Pakistan Shiite Muslim women hold placards during a rally to condemn Monday's suicide bombing over a Shiites procession, Saturday, Jan. 2, 2010 in Karachi, Pakistan.

Read more on Page A9

SPORTS NEWS

SIXTH 2K



Tennessee Titans' Chris Johnson runs against the Seattle Seahawks in the second quarter during an NFL football game Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010, in Seattle. On Sunday, Johnson has become the sixth player in NFL history to rush for 2,000 yards in a season.

Read more on Page 12

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A Yemeni soldier stands guard in front of the main entrance of the US Embassy while two workers repair the gate in the background, in the capital San'a, Yemen, in this Sept. 18, 2008 file photo. A statement posted on Sunday Jan. 3, 2009 on the embassy Web site said it had closed but provided no further details.

Associated Press

U.S., UK close Yemen embassies over threats

ANNE GEARAN

LEE KEATH

Associated Press Writers

SAN'A, Yemen (AP) — Western embassies in Yemen locked up Sunday after fresh threats from al-Qaida, and the White House expressed alarm at the terror group's expanded reach in the poor Arab nation where an offshoot apparently ordered the Christmas Day plot against a U.S. airliner.

President Barack Obama's top counterterrorism adviser, John Brennan, cited "indications al-Qaida is planning to carry out an attack against a target" in the capital, possibly the embassy, and estimated the group had several hundred members in Yemen. Security reasons led Britain to act, too; it was not known when the embassies would reopen.

The U.S. is worried about the spread of terrorism in Yemen, a U.S. ally and aid recipient, Brennan said, but doesn't consider the country a second front with Afghanistan and Pakistan in the fight against terrorism. As to whether U.S. troops might be sent to Yemen, Brennan replied: "We're not talking about that at this point at all." He pledged to provide the Yemeni government with "the wherewithal" to take down al-Qaida.

Britain and the United States are assisting a counterterrorism police unit in Yemen as fears grow about the increasing threat of international terrorism originating from the country.

Continued on Page 6



A Transportation Security Administration officer views a full-body scan during a demonstration of passenger screening technology, Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2009, at the TSA Systems Integration Facility in Arlington, Va.

Associated Press

Passengers on U.S.-bound flights face more screening

WASHINGTON (AP) — Passengers flying into the United States from Nigeria, Yemen and other "countries of interest" will be subject to enhanced screening techniques, such as body scans and pat-downs, the Transportation Security Administration said Sunday.

Starting Monday, all passengers on U.S.-bound international flights will be subject to random screening. Airports are also directed to increase "threat-based" screening of passengers who may be acting in a suspicious manner.

In addition, anyone traveling from or through nations regarded as state sponsors of terrorism — as well as "other countries of interest" — will be required to go through enhanced screening. The TSA said those techniques include full-body pat-downs, carry-on bag searches, full-body scanning and explosive detection technology.

The State Department lists Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria as state sponsors of terrorism. The other countries whose passengers will face enhanced screening include Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian man who allegedly tried to set off an explosive device aboard a Northwest airliner on Christmas Day, has told U.S. investigators he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen.

The TSA said the ability to enforce the new security measures is the "result of extraordinary cooperation from our global aviation partners." □



State budget pictures bleak as lawmakers head back

By SHANNON McCAFFREY
Associated Press Writer

ATLANTA — If you thought state budgets were in bad shape last year, just wait: 2010 promises to be brutal for lawmakers — many facing re-election — as they scramble to find enough money to keep their states running without raising taxes.

Tax collections continue to sputter. Federal stimulus dollars are about to dry up. Rainy day funds have been tapped. And demand for

services — like Medicaid, food stamps and unemployment benefits — is soaring.

As lawmakers head back to state capitols this month, budget woes range “from bad to ridiculously bad,” said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poors in New York. “There are some states, those hit particularly hard by the recession, that I don’t think can cut spending enough. They’re running out of things to cut.”

Typically, the worst budget

years for states are the two years after a recession ends. Across the nation, budgets are already lean after several rounds on the chopping block. And unless lawmakers increase taxes or fees — unpopular moves in an election year — most will need to cut even more as they grapple with the steepest decline of tax receipts on record. Services ranging from higher education to programs for the elderly could be in jeopardy.

The crunch could also mean new tolls to fund road projects, more prisoners being released early to trim corrections budgets, and the end of welfare programs that don’t bring federal matching dollars.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities offers a bleak forecast: State budget shortfalls are likely to reach a whopping \$180 billion for the coming fiscal year, double the size of Texas’ annual budget.

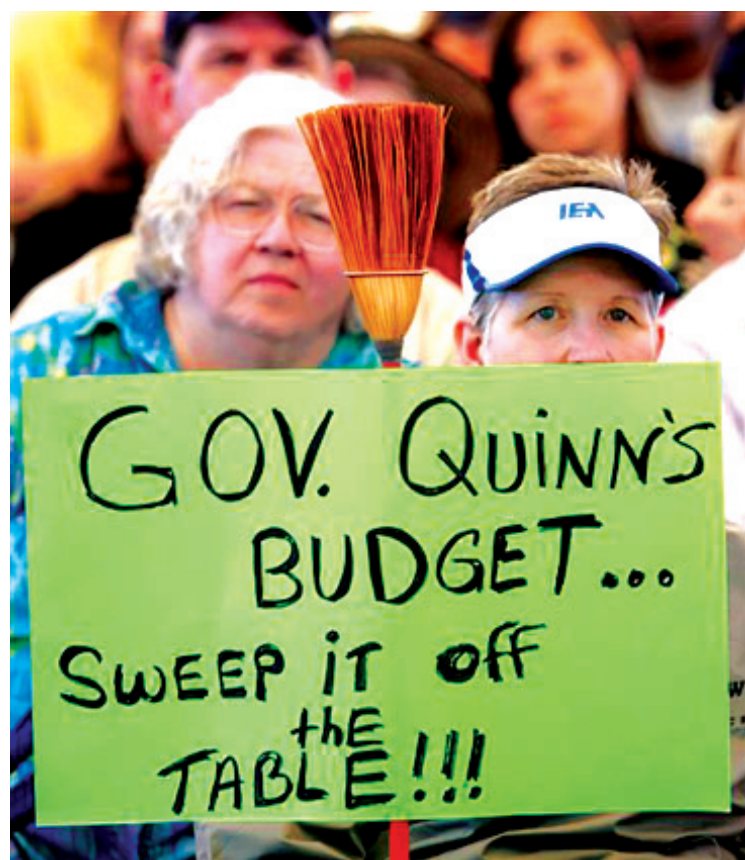
“It’s going to be the toughest year yet,” said Raymond Scheppach, director of the National Governors Association, who predicts funding could evaporate for higher education, the arts and economic development. “The states haven’t hit bottom.”

Mary Ann Neureiter, who runs an adult day care center in suburban Atlanta, saw her state aid cut in half in 2009. The Cambridge House Enrichment Center once offered state-subsidized care to 10 low-income clients with disabilities such as Alzheimer’s. It’s now down to three, and Neureiter fears the funding could dry up altogether this year.

“It’s heartbreaking because I foresee, in the coming year, it’s going to get even worse for services for the elderly,” she said.

States had already closed a \$146 billion gap when they put together their budgets for the current fiscal year. They were short by about 20 percent, with 36 states now reporting an additional shortfall of \$28.2 billion for the fiscal year that ends in June, according to data compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

That’s because state tax



In this May 6, 2009 file photo, teacher Carrie Cox from Andrew High School in Tinley Park, Ill., protests along with other teachers opposing Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn’s budget cuts and new pension plan during a rally across the street from the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield. As the recession drags on, municipalities struggling to fix roads, fund schools and pay bills increasingly are rescinding tax abatements to companies that don’t hire enough workers, lay them off or close up shop.

Associated Press

collections lagged behind even projections revised downward to be more pessimistic.

Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have already slashed spending on popular services, including education, health care and services to the elderly and disabled.

With cuts reaching into classrooms and hitting the neediest residents, elected officials will be under increasing pressure to find more revenue. But in a number of fiscally conservative states, leaders have pledged not to raise taxes, leaving them few options.

In Oregon, voters go to the polls Jan. 26 to decide whether to uphold tax increases the Legislature imposed on corporations and higher-income residents.

Scott Moore, of the pro-tax group Vote Yes for Oregon, said the \$727 million tax increase package will protect schools and critical services while keeping the burden off middle-class families. But Pat McCormick of Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes argues the tax increases will

cost the state private sector jobs and keep it in recession.

Lawmakers in other states will be watching to see what happens, said Corina Eckl, fiscal policy director for the National Conference of State Legislatures.

“It really could be a bellwether for public tolerance,” she said.

One possible rescue could come in the form of more stimulus money from Washington, but the prospects are uncertain. States last year were able to tap President Barack Obama’s economic stimulus package to soften the blow of budget cuts, mainly in education and health care, and some of that money is still left.

Politics are also at play. Twenty-two governorships are open in 2010, meaning incumbents on their way out the door could try to hand off the budget misery to their successors. Some are already signaling the pain ahead.

In Washington state, Gov. Christine Gregoire has said she will propose a tax increase package to help close a \$2.6 billion state budget deficit. □

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Advocate uses texting to warn of crime sweeps

PHOENIX (AP) — An advocate for immigrant and civil rights has started using text messages to warn residents about crime sweeps by a high-profile Arizona sheriff.

Lydia Guzman, director of the nonprofit immigrant advocacy group Respect/Respeto, is the trunk of a sophisticated texting tree designed to alert thousands of people within minutes to the details of the sweeps, which critics contend are an excuse to round up illegal immigrants, The Arizona Republic newspaper reported.

Guzman said the messages are part of an effort to protect Latinos and others from becoming victims of racial profiling by sheriff's deputies. Deputies have been accused of stopping Hispanics, including citizens and legal immigrants, for minor traffic violations to check their immigration

status.

"Everyone is responsible for sending it out to their own networks, and that is how it spreads like wildfire," Guzman said of the text messages.

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio has repeatedly said his deputies do not engage in racial profiling, and he publicizes the details of his crime sweeps ahead of time. He said he suspects the real goal of the text messages is to help illegal immigrants avoid arrest.

"This little group of people is (in favor of) open borders, and they don't like what I am doing. That is the bottom line," Arpaio said. "But it isn't interfering with our operations because every time we do it, we still arrest a good number of people, including illegal aliens."

Arpaio has conducted 13 sweeps since March 2008, and deputies have arrested 669 people, about half

of whom were held on immigration violations.

The sheriff said his opponents are walking a line between exercising free speech and breaking the law by helping immigration violators avoid detection. He said the texts are possibly even tipping off human-smuggling organizations.

Guzman said she sends the messages to a wide range of groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona, Copwatch and various immigrant-rights groups such as Somos America and Puente. She concedes that some who receive the text messages likely use the information to avoid being caught and deported.

Andy Hessick, a constitutional law professor at Arizona State University, said sending warnings to people who might be subject to racial profiling would likely be considered



In this Oct. 1, 2008 file photo, Arizona state Rep. Russell Pearce, left, a Republican from Mesa, and Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas talk as they arrive at a news conference to discuss the employer sanctions proposal and why they and others are against the new measure, at the Arizona state Capitol in Phoenix.

Associated Press

free speech. But sending messages with the specific intent of warning illegal immigrants to help them avoid arrest could be akin to being an accomplice after a crime.

David Hudson Jr., a First Amendment scholar at the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, said

the messages are protected free speech because they are merely letting people know what Arpaio is doing, similar to publicizing DUI checkpoints and speed traps or flashing your headlights when police are nearby.

"That is not unlawful," he said. "It's the conveyance of truthful information." □

TV show led to arrest in four Thanksgiving killings

By JENNIFER KAY

Associated Press Writer

MIAMI — A secretive motel guest in the Florida Keys checked in under a fake name, paid in cash, stockpiled canned food and insisted on cleaning his own room. He even covered his car — all an attempt, authorities said, to elude police after he was accused of gunning down four relatives at Thanksgiving dinner. But Paul Merhige's cover was blown when the motel owners recognized him in a preview for the television show "America's Most Wanted" on Saturday night.

Melinda Pfaff told The Associated Press on Sunday that she and her husband, Paul, rarely saw Merhige during his four-week stay at their Edgewater Lodge on Long Key. He had checked in Dec. 2, a few days after the shootings, using the name "John Baca" and a false address.

His request for privacy didn't seem odd on an island chain known for its eccentric

residents, she said.

"He said he would wash all his own sheets and towels. He said I didn't need to go in there," she said. "That's happened before."

Merhige was booked early Sunday at the Palm Beach County jail without bond on four charges of murder. He was accused of gunning down his twin sisters, a 79-year-old aunt and a 6-year-old cousin at a home where 16 relatives had gathered for the holiday in Jupiter, an affluent community about 90 miles north of Miami. Merhige's arrest late Saturday ended a monthlong manhunt that included billboards and flyers with his image. Police at one point thought he may have fled to Michigan, where he had been treated by a psychiatrist. Melinda Pfaff, 53, said none of the flyers or billboards made it to the Keys.

"People know nobody's going to look for them down here," she said.

The Palm Beach Post reported that Merhige remained silent

at his first court appearance Sunday. He was appointed a public defender, and an arraignment is set for Feb. 1.

An after-hours recording at the Palm Beach County public defender's office would not accept a telephone message.

"I'm elated that the monster is in the cage," Jim Sitton, the father of the 6-year-old victim Makayla Sitton, told The Palm Beach Post. "... It doesn't bring my daughter back, but at least this chapter is over."

Merhige appeared to be planning a long stay at the small, oceanfront motel. He had stocked his room with snacks and bottled water, and paid in advance in cash. On Dec. 21, he extended his stay well into the new year.

But her husband became worried when he realized Friday that he hadn't seen the guest for several days.

"He opened the door and my husband said, 'Are you OK? I haven't seen you,'" Melinda Pfaff said. "The room looked neat, not disarrayed or

anything. He said he was fine and he was enjoying his rest." Paul Pfaff was watching television Saturday night when he saw the "America's Most Wanted" preview and realized Merhige was his guest. Melinda Pfaff then double checked the show's Web site, which also had surveillance video.

"I had seen the way he walked, the way he shifted his eyes, the smile. It wasn't just a picture recognition — it was, yes, I see that it is him," she said.

The couple called the tip line, and U.S. Marshals and local deputies soon broke through the sliding door glass to his motel room, authorities said.

Authorities have said Merhige carefully planned the killings. Merhige sat through three hours of dinner and sing-alongs around the piano before the shootings. There were no arguments, warnings or red flags before the rampage, said Sitton, a relative who was there. Sitton has said Merhige was heard after the shootings



In this undated file photo provided by the Jupiter, Fla. Police Dept. suspect Paul Michael Merhige is shown. A Florida man suspected of killing four family members in a Thanksgiving shooting was arrested Saturday Jan. 2, 2010 in the Florida Keys, authorities said.

Associated Press

saying that he had waited 20 years to kill the relatives.

Merhige's father told police on the day of the shootings that his son had a history of mental illness, had recently stopped taking his medication and had shot himself in the chest 15 years earlier, according to an arrest report released Sunday and posted online by the Post □

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Some Dems want Gitmo-to-Yemen transfers stopped

In this photograph released by "Meet The Press", John Brennan, Deputy National Security Adviser, appears on "Meet the Press" at the NBC studios Sunday January 3, 2010 in Washington.

Associated Press

DOUGLASS K. DANIEL
 Associated Press Writer
 WASHINGTON (AP)

— Some Democratic lawmakers who support closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, say the U.S. should reconsider whether to repatriate suspected terrorists from Yemen, given the al-Qaida activity in the poor Arab nation.

President Barack Obama's top counterterrorism adviser, John Brennan, said Sunday the transfers will continue if the administration deems them warranted.

Six Yemenis returned last month were released after the government there determined they were not a threat, officials in Yemen told The Associated Press. President Barack Obama has said an al-Qaida group operating in Yemen apparently was behind the

plot to bring down a U.S.-bound airliner on Christmas Day. The U.S. and Britain closed their embassies in Yemen on Sunday in response to threats from al-Qaida.

Although Republicans have criticized the transfers to Yemen, some Democrats, including Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein of California also have urged a halt.

Rep. Jane Harman of California, a member of the Homeland Security Committee, said Sunday that officials should review the transfers. She does support plans to close the prison and open one in Illinois for terrorism suspects.

"I think it is a bad time to send the 90 or so Yemenis back to Yemen," Harman said.

Sen. Joe Lieberman, a Connecticut independent who has opposed closing Guantanamo, said transferring any of the Yemeni detainees back home would be irresponsible.

"We know from past experience that some of them will be back in the fight against us," Lieberman said.

U.S. officials believe two Saudis released from Guantanamo, one in 2006 and the other in 2007, may have played significant roles in al-Qaida activities in Yemen.

An estimated 90 Yemenis are being held at Guantanamo Bay and about half are set to be sent to Yemen. Those

who remain in U.S. custody will be prosecuted in criminal or military courts, Brennan said.

"Some of these individuals are going to be transferred back to Yemen at the right time and the right pace and in the right way," Brennan said. "We're making sure that the situation on the ground is taken into account, that we continue to work with the Yemeni government, and we do this in a very commonsense fashion because we want to make sure that we are able to close Guantanamo."

Yemen has freed the six Yemenis who were released from Guantanamo Bay and returned to the country on Dec. 20, security officials and a lawyer for the men told The Associated Press.

The lawyer, Ahmed al-Arman, said the six were freed from Yemeni custody over the last week, with the last two freed Saturday night. They were handed over to their families.

Security officials held the six for questioning and investigation since their handover by the United States, but they found no evidence of involvement in terrorism or other crimes, Yemeni security officials said. The six gave guarantees that they would not leave the country, would not associate with terror groups and would report regularly to the police, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters. □

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Man skirts security at NJ airport; flights stopped

By KIM GAMEL,
Associated Press Writer

NEWARK, N.J. — Authorities were searching for a man who walked through a screening checkpoint exit into the secure side of a terminal Sunday night at Newark Liberty International Airport, and flights were grounded and passengers being re-screened, an air safety official said.

A man was seen walking down an exit lane at Terminal C about 5:30 p.m., said Transportation Security Administration spokeswoman Ann Davis, and screening was halted in the Continental terminal while authorities looked at surveillance tapes to identify the man.

Passengers were then evacuated from the secure side of the terminal and moved to the open side to go through screening again to ensure that every passenger boarding a plane tonight out of the terminal was fully screened, Davis said in a statement. The security line was emptied, and passengers were waiting in check-in areas.

No announcements had been made over the airport's public-address system as of 9:45 p.m. Security officers were instructing passengers, who were expressing frustration over the situation.

Alison Day, 47, of York, England, was supposed to leave for Manchester, England, at 7:30 Sunday night. She was traveling with a party of seven including an 18-month-old and 5-year-old.

"I'm not angry that this is happening, but I'm angry that there was a lack of



Passengers wait to be re-screened in front of the security checkpoint at Terminal C at Newark International Airport in Newark, New Jersey January 3, 2010. The terminal was locked down on Sunday because of a security breach, CNN reported, citing the Transportation Security Administration.

Reuters Photo

organization," she said.

She said her party, headed home after a Caribbean cruise, was escorted out of Continental's lounge but given no further instructions.

Continental spokeswoman Susannah Thurston said it's an airport security issue not involving the Houston-based airline.

A spokesman said the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is assisting with the possible security breach, and Davis had no update late Sunday night on the man who

walked through the exit.

Also Sunday, the Transportation Security Administration said passengers flying into the United States from nations regarded as state sponsors of terrorism and "countries of interest" will be subject to enhanced screening techniques, such as body scans and pat-downs.

Starting Monday, all passengers on U.S.-bound international flights will be subject to random screening. The State Department lists Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria

as state sponsors of terrorism.

The other countries whose passengers will face enhanced screening include Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab,

the Nigerian man who allegedly tried to set off an explosive device aboard a Northwest airliner on Christmas Day, has told U.S. investigators he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen.

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YEMEN EMBASSIES**Continued from Front Page**

The Obama administration claims that the suspect in the plot against the Detroit-bound plane was trained and armed by the al-Qaida affiliate in Yemen. Brennan blamed a series of what he called lapses and human errors in U.S. intelligence and security defenses for allowing a Nigerian man to board the plane with explosives. He tried to detonate them as the aircraft approached Detroit on Dec. 25.

The Transportation Security Administration announced Sunday that, starting Monday, passengers flying into the United States from Nigeria, Yemen and other “countries of interest” will be subject to enhanced screening techniques, such as body scans and pat-downs.

Yemen is a poor, decentralized and predominantly Muslim country on the Arabian Peninsula. It is the ancestral homeland of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, and the site of the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, which killed 17 U.S. sailors. A 2008 attack on the U.S. Embassy killed one American.

Given the active threat from al-Qaida, “we’re not going to take any chances,” Brennan said from Washington during appearances on four Sunday talk shows.

Sen. Joe Lieberman identified three instances in which terrorists or sympathizers penetrated or evaded U.S. defenses last year — shootings at a military recruiting station and an Army base and the airline attack — and said all three were linked to Yemen.

“We’ve got to focus there preemptively, and I’m confident we will,” said Lieberman, an independent from Connecticut.

The Yemeni government, which issued no official

comment on the embassy closures, is friendly to the West but the population is often mistrustful of Western motives and influence. Yemen has pledged to clamp down on militancy, but government control is weak outside the capital and the country has a history of freeing some alleged militants and tolerating others.

The Obama administration is growing more vocal about both the threat and the San’a government’s limitations. Brennan said Westerners are at risk in Yemen until the government gets a better handle on extremism.

The U.S. will look case by case at whether to repatriate the remaining approximately 90 Yemeni detainees held at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp, Brennan said.

Seven of 42 Guantanamo detainees freed by the Obama administration were returned to Yemen, Brennan said, but doubts about the country’s ability to police further freed detainees is a major obstacle to Obama’s plan to shut down the facility. Brennan reaffirmed the U.S. administration’s support for the closure, but said that with regard to the Yemeni detainees, nothing would be done to put U.S. citizens at risk.

U.S. officials say terrorists are seeking new places to operate, including Yemen, Somalia and Southeast Asia, in part because of pressure on their previous sanctuaries in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Some U.S. officials have said privately that Yemen’s location at the heart of the Arab world, its history of tribal control, poverty, corruption and an ongoing civil war could make it the crucible of a future war. Brennan said the Obama administration is trying to head off the threat now.

Gen. David Petraeus, the U.S. general who oversees the



Yemeni soldiers on top of a truck patrol the road in front of the main entrance of the US Embassy in the capital San’a, Yemen in this Sept. 18, 2008 file photo. A statement posted on Sunday Jan. 3, 2010 on the embassy Web site said it had closed but provided no further details.

Associated Press

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, made a surprise visit to Yemen over the weekend. Following meetings with President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Petraeus announced that Washington this year will more than double the \$67 million in counterterrorism aid that it provided Yemen in 2009.

The U.S. and Britain are funding a counterterrorism police unit in Yemen, and Britain plans to host an international conference Jan. 28 to come up with a strategy to counter radicalization in Yemen.

The United States has increased military cooperation with Yemen, with intelligence and other help to back two Yemeni air and ground assaults on al-Qaida hide-outs last month that were reported to have killed more than 60 people. Yemeni authorities said more than 30 suspected militants were among the dead.

The U.S. has stepped up intelligence, surveillance and training aid to Yemeni forces during the past year, and provided some firepower, a

senior U.S. defense official has said. Some of that assistance may be through the expanded use of unmanned drones, and the U.S. is providing funding to Yemen for helicopters and other equipment. Officials, however, say there are no U.S. ground forces or fighter aircraft in Yemen.

On Thursday, the U.S. Embassy sent a notice to Americans in Yemen urging them to be vigilant about security. Yemeni security officials said over the weekend that the country had deployed several hundred extra troops to Marib and Juf, two mountainous eastern provinces that are al-Qaida’s main strongholds in the country and where airliner suspect Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab may have visited last year.

U.S. intelligence agencies did not miss a telltale sign that that could have prevented the 23-year-old Nigerian man’s alleged attempt to blow up the airliner, Brennan said.

“There is no smoking gun,” Brennan said. “There was no single piece of intelligence

that said, ‘this guy is going to get on a plane.’”

Brennan is leading a White House review of the incident. Obama ordered a thorough look at the shortcomings that permitted the plot, which failed not because of U.S. actions but because the would-be attacker was unable to ignite an explosive device. The president has summoned homeland security officials to meet with him in the White House Situation Room on Tuesday.

Brennan cited “a number of streams of information” — the suspect’s name was known to intelligence officials, his father had passed along his concern about the son’s increasing radicalization — and “little snippets” from intelligence channels. “But there was nothing that brought it all together.”

“In this one instance, the system didn’t work. There were some human errors. There were some lapses. We need to strengthen it.”

Brennan didn’t say whether anyone is in line to be fired because of the oversights. He stood by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, although he acknowledged she has “taken some hits” for saying that the airline security system had worked. It didn’t, and she clarified her remarks to show she meant that the system worked only after the attack was foiled, Brennan said. □

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Ex-Israeli PM still comatose 4 years after stroke

IAN DEITCH

Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM (AP) — Ariel Sharon, the tough army general turned premier who shocked his hawkish supporters by pulling Israel out of Gaza in 2005, is still lying unconscious in a hospital bed, friends said Sunday on the fourth anniversary of the massive stroke that put him in a coma. Sharon, 81, led Israel from 2001 until the January 2006 stroke that left him comatose.

Dov Weisglass, a close friend of Sharon and his former spokesman, told The Associated Press on Sunday that Sharon's vital signs are good but it was not clear if he would ever regain consciousness. Medical experts have said that is most unlikely.

Sharon was a daring army officer who reached the rank of major general in the 1970s, sometimes disobeying orders

from his superiors. After leaving the army, Sharon turned to politics, becoming a hawkish lawmaker in the Likud Party and an enthusiastic supporter of the movement to settle the West Bank with Israelis.

He served in several Cabinet posts, including defense minister. He was the architect of Israel's disastrous war in Lebanon, which began in 1982.

The next year he was forced to resign by an Israeli commission of inquiry that found him indirectly responsible for the massacre of around 800 Palestinians at the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps by Lebanese Christian militiamen.

Resurrecting his political career, he was elected Israel's prime minister in 2001.

Turning his back on his uncompromising ideology in 2005, Sharon unilaterally

withdrew all Israeli settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip, ending Israel's 38-year occupation of the territory and daily clashes between settlers and soldiers with Palestinian militants. Outraged hawkish backers abandoned him, and Sharon created a new centrist party, Kadima, to run in March 2006 elections.

Riding a wave of popularity, Sharon appeared to be well on his way to re-election when he suffered a stroke on Jan. 4, 2006.

Doctors fought to keep him alive after severe hemorrhaging that caused significant brain damage, performing a number of desperate operations to stop the bleeding but leaving him in a vegetative state. Several months later, he was moved to a long-term care facility outside Tel Aviv.

Raanan Gissin, another close friend of Sharon and former spokesman, told the AP that



In this file photo taken on Monday, Nov. 21, 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon speaks during a press conference at his Jerusalem office. Four years after a devastating stroke, former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon remains in a coma.

Associated Press

Sharon is not connected to a respirator but sometimes needs an oxygen mask at night. "There is still no change physiologically. His body functions but he has still not regained consciousness," Gissin said. "Who knows if he can hear or not."

Gissin said he visits Sharon often, as does Sharon's family and former staff, including a driver. "Our hope is that he will regain consciousness one day," he said. But there are few cases of patients emerging from deep comas after such a long time. □



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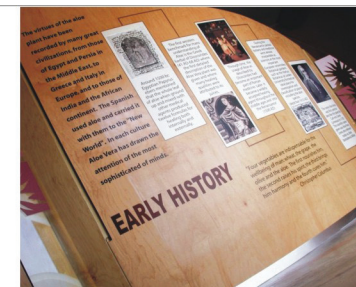
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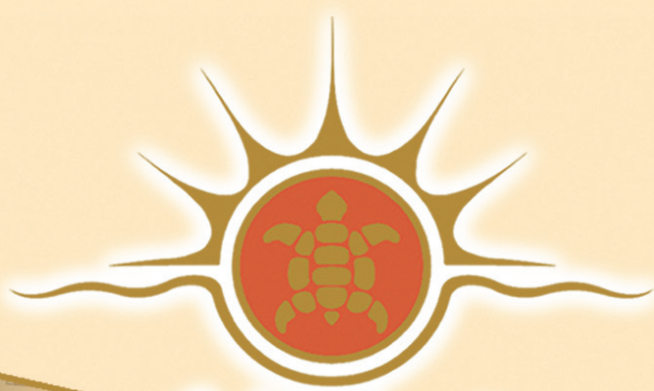
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Roadside bombs kill 6 in Pakistan's northwest

HUSSAIN AFZAL

Associated Press Writer

PARACHINAR, Pakistan (AP) — Roadside bombs that struck two vehicles in Pakistan's volatile northwest Sunday have killed a former irrigation minister and three others in one of the attacks and two anti-Taliban tribal elders in the other.

The attacks Sunday were the latest targeting public officials and private citizens who are combatting the growing Taliban-led insurgency, part of a wave of retaliatory violence that has killed more than 600 people in the past two-and-a-half months.

A single attack on Friday killed nearly 100 people when a suicide car bomber struck a sports event near a meeting of tribesmen who supervise an anti-Taliban militia near Pakistan's South Waziristan tribal area.

The Pakistani army invaded South Waziristan in mid-October in an attempt to neutralize the Pakistani Taliban's main stronghold in the country, but many militants fled the offensive and have been launching attacks elsewhere in the

northwest.

The Pakistani government has pledged it will persevere despite the violence but has resisted U.S. calls to expand its offensive to target militants launching cross-border attacks against coalition troops in Afghanistan.

The U.S. has responded by increasing drone missile strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas, including a suspected attack Sunday in North Waziristan that killed at least five people, according to intelligence officials.

Hours earlier, a roadside bomb struck a vehicle in the Hangu district of North West Frontier Province, killing former Irrigation Minister Ghaniur Rehman, his two guards and his driver, said district police chief Abdur Rasheed. Two police officers accompanying the former minister were wounded in the attack, he said.

Rehman was affiliated with the Pakistan People's Party (Sherpao group) headed by former Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao, who has survived two suicide bomb attacks.

The attack came after a roadside bomb struck a

vehicle carrying anti-Taliban elders in the Bajur tribal area, killing two and critically wounding four others, said local official Naseeb Shah. The six men were working to set up an anti-Taliban militia in Bajur, a militant stronghold near the Afghan border, said Shah.

The men were on their way to meet local officials in the main town of Khar when the remote-controlled device detonated, Shah said. The blast occurred near Kassai, about 17 miles (28 kilometers) northeast of Khar, he said.

The Pakistani military carried out an anti-Taliban offensive in Bajur in 2008 and 2009 that it declared a success. But the militants have maintained their presence, and violence has flared in the region since then. The bullet-riddled bodies of a man and a woman were found in the Mamund area of Bajur on Sunday with a note saying they were guilty of violating Islamic law, local official Faromosh Khan said.

Militants have stepped up attacks in other parts of the northwest as well in apparent retaliation for the recent



Members of a Pakistani civil society light candle for the victims of suicide bombing, at a rally in Karachi, Pakistan on Saturday, Jan. 2, 2010. The Friday's attack on Shah Hasan Khel village was one of the deadliest in a surge of bombings that have killed hundreds of people across Pakistan since October.

Associated Press

South Waziristan offensive. The suicide car bombing in the northwest village of Shah Hasan Khel near South Waziristan that killed 96 people on New Year's Day was one of the deadliest attacks since the army launched the operation.

The suspected U.S. drone missile strikes that killed five men Sunday near the town of Mir Ali in North Waziristan targeted the house of a well-known tribesman and a vehicle nearby, said intelligence officials,

speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

One of the five killed in the attack was the tribesman's grandson, said the officials. It was unclear if the four others were militants or civilians.

U.S. officials rarely discuss the missile strikes, and although Pakistan's government publicly condemns them as violations of its sovereignty, many analysts believe the two countries have a secret deal allowing them. □

'Avatar' rules with \$68.3M, tops \$1B worldwide

By DAVID GERMAIN,
AP Movie Writer
LOS ANGELES — James Cameron's science-fiction epic "Avatar" had another stellar weekend with \$68.3 million domestically, shooting past \$1 billion worldwide, only the fifth movie ever to hit that mark.

No. 1 for the third-straight weekend, 20th Century Fox's "Avatar" raised its domestic total to \$352.1 million after just 17 days. The film added \$133 million overseas to lift its international haul to \$670 million, for a worldwide gross of \$1.02 billion.

"Avatar" opened two weekends earlier with \$77 million, a strong start but far below dozens of other blockbusters that debuted as high as \$158 million. But business for other blockbusters usually tumbles in following weekends, while "Avatar" revenues barely dropped over the busy Christmas and New Year's weekends.

"It's like a runaway freight train. It just keeps doing business," said Fox distribution executive Bert Livingston. "Here's what's happening: I think everybody has to see 'Avatar' once. Even people who don't normally go to the movies, they've heard about it and are saying, 'I have to see it.' Then there's those people seeing it multiple times."

"Avatar" was Cameron's first film since 1997's "Titanic," the biggest modern blockbuster

with \$1.8 billion worldwide. Cameron now is the only filmmaker to direct two movies that have topped \$1 billion. Along with "Titanic," the others are "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" at \$1.13 billion, "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest" at \$1.06 billion and "The Dark Knight" at a fraction over \$1 billion, according to box-office tracker Hollywood.com.

With "Avatar" closing in on No. 2 film "The Return of the King," Cameron is in striking distance of having the two top-grossing movies globally.

"Avatar" has had a price advantage over those other billion-dollar movies. About 75 percent of its domestic business has come from theaters showing it in digital 3-D presentation, those tickets typically costing a few dollars more than admissions for the 2-D version.

Finishing at No. 2 for the weekend was Robert Downey Jr.'s crime caper "Sherlock Holmes" with \$38.4 million. The Warner Bros. film lifted its domestic total to \$140.7 million after 10 days in theaters.

In third place was 20th Century Fox's family tale "Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel" with \$36.6 million. It raised its 10-day total to \$157.3 million.

The top-three movies, along with solid holdovers that included Universal's "It's



FILE - This undated file photo released by 20th Century Fox, the character Neytiri, voiced by Zoe Saldana, is shown in a scene from 'Avatar.' James Cameron's science-fiction epic took in \$68.3 million domestically to remain the No. 1 movie for the third-straight weekend, raising its domestic total to \$352.1 million in just 17 days. With \$670 million more overseas, 'Avatar' climbed to a worldwide total of \$1.02 billion.

(AP Photo/20th Century Fox, File)

Complicated" at No. 4 with \$18.7 million, steered Hollywood to a big start to 2010 after a year of record revenue. Hollywood finished 2009 with \$10.6 billion domestically, easily surpassing the previous record of \$9.7 billion in 2007, according to Hollywood.com. Factoring in today's higher admission prices, the year was strong but not a modern record-breaker for number of tickets sold. According to Hollywood.com, domestic admissions came in at 1.42 billion in 2009, the most in the last five years, though well below the modern record of 1.6 billion in 2002. In Hollywood's glory years of the 1930s and

'40s, before television eroded the movie audience, estimated movie attendance ran as high as 4 billion some years. Studios began 2010 with a headstart over last year. Overall revenues came in at \$230 million, up 50 percent from New Year's weekend in 2009, when "Marley & Me" was No. 1 with \$24.3 million. Like "Titanic" 12 years ago, "Avatar" has fairly clear sailing now that the holidays are over. Hollywood is entering a slow season, when fewer big movies arrive and competition is lighter. "Titanic" lingered as the No. 1 film for months leading up to the Academy Awards, where it won 11 Oscars, including best picture and director. □



FILE - Rapper Eminem performs at a concert celebrating the launch of the video game 'DJ Hero' in Los Angeles on in this June 1, 2009 file photo. Elton John said Saturday Jan. 2, 2010 he has been helping American rapper Eminem fight drug problems for more than a year.

(AP Photo/Matt Sayles, File)

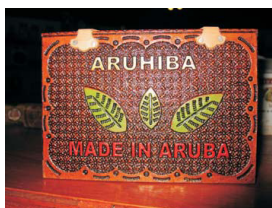
Elton John says he's helping Eminem fight drugs

LONDON — Elton John says he has been helping American rapper Eminem fight drug problems for more than a year. John says Eminem is succeeding in his well-publicized battle against substance abuse. John told BBC Radio Saturday that as a recovered drug abuser he is happy to help people if they want the assistance but drugs make people so cocky and arrogant that they often reject help. Eminem has written about his substance abuse problems in the past. □

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New year, old worries for U.S. stocks



A trader pauses to view price monitors on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange just before the close of the final trading session of 2009 December 31, 2009.

By Edward Krudy

NEW YORK (Reuters) – U.S. stocks closed out 2009 with the best performance in six years, but monthly employment figures in the first week of the new year will keep investors focused on what is likely to be 2010's reality -- the economy's struggle to recover.

On the data front, the main event will be Friday's report from the Labor Department on U.S. non-farm payrolls in December. Economists polled by Reuters have forecast that payrolls shed 20,000 jobs in the final month of 2009, compared with just 11,000 lost in November.

The Institute for Supply Management's report on manufacturing, due on Monday, is expected to show the ailing sector was still slow to expand in December, while a projected drop in November pending home sales, due on Tuesday, will underscore the housing market's shaky recovery.

Major factors in the stock market's 2009 rally have been ultra-low interest rates and the Federal Reserve's purchases of securities. A repeat of November's much better-than-expected unemployment report could cause investors to worry that the Fed will increase borrowing costs sooner than previously thought.

REUTERS/Mike Segar

Thomas Wilson, managing director of institutional investments at Brinker Capital in Berwyn, Pennsylvania, said the unwinding of the fiscal and monetary stimulus, possibly in the second half of 2010, will be a "delicate and deliberate process" that could ruffle markets.

Expectations that interest rates may rise sooner than expected have been helping the U.S. dollar recently, which could make a sustained move higher -- if expectations for higher rates increase further.

The stock market moved inversely to the dollar through most of 2009.

A continued bounce in the greenback in 2010 could hurt stocks.

"The market's reaction to the generally stronger dollar is going to dictate a lot of the investment themes for the first half of 2010 and maybe the year at large," said Bruce Zaro, chief technical strategist at Delta Global Advisors in Boston.

A TURNAROUND YEAR

Despite a 65 percent gain in the S&P 500 from its 12-year closing low in early March, stock investors have lost money this decade when total returns are taken into account. Few will be overwhelmed with the long-term performance of their portfolios.

As 2009 ended, Wall Street capped its first-ever negative decade on a total return basis, even with dividends reinvested.

Nevertheless, investors will remember 2009 as the year that the U.S. stock market made a substantial turnaround from its plunge in 2008 when fallout from the implosion of subprime mortgages and the credit crisis forced Lehman Brothers into bankruptcy - changing the landscape of Wall Street forever.

For 2009, the Dow Jones industrial average (.DJI) climbed 18.8 percent, the S&P 500 (.SPX) shot up 23.5 percent and the Nasdaq (.IXIC) surged 43.9 percent.

JOBS, RATES AND HOUSING

Friday's non-farm payroll report is expected to confirm that U.S. job losses continued to bottom out in December. The data is also likely to reinforce expectations that the U.S. unemployment rate will peak in the first half of next year.

The unemployment rate is expected to edge up to 10.1 percent in December after it unexpectedly fell to 10 percent the month before.

In December, the Fed stuck to its commitment to keep interest rates close to zero for an "extended period." Some investors took November's unemployment number as a sign that rates may need to rise faster.

That debate could start again if Friday's number is better than expected.

Better economic data "will raise concerns about the possibility the Fed will tighten earlier than most investors anticipate, but given what we're hearing from the Federal Reserve, it seems unlikely," said Carmine Grigoli, chief U.S. investment strategist at Mizuho Securities in New York. □

Fed: Regulation 1st defense against speculation

By JEANNINE AVERSA,
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — Stronger regulation is the best way to prevent financial speculation from getting out of hand and throwing the economy in a new crisis, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said Sunday. But he didn't rule out higher interest rates to stop new speculative investment bubbles from forming.

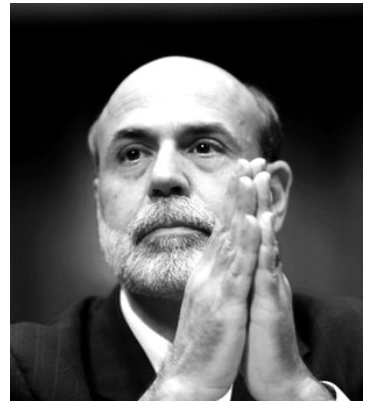
The Fed chief's remarks were his most extensive on the subject since the housing market's tumble led to the gravest financial crisis since World War II — and perhaps the worst in modern history, in his view.

Critics blame the Fed for feeding that speculative boom in housing by holding interest rates too low for too long after the 2001 recession.

But Bernanke, in a speech to the American Economic Association's annual meeting in Atlanta, defended the central bank's actions. Extra-low rates were needed to get the economy and job creation back to full throttle after the Sept. 11 attacks and accounting scandals that rocked Wall Street, he said.

Bernanke said the direct links were weak between super-low interest rates and the rapid rise in house prices that occurred at roughly the same time. The stance of interest rates during that period "does not appear to have been inappropriate," he said. Still, the enormous economic damage from the housing bust — the longest and deepest recession since the 1930s and double-digit unemployment — shows how important it is to guard against a repeat, Bernanke said.

"All efforts should be made to strengthen our regulatory system to prevent a recurrence of the crisis, and to cushion the effects if another crisis



FILE - In this July 22, 2009 photo, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington. The Federal Reserve on Monday, Dec. 28, 2009, proposed allowing banks to set up the equivalent of certificates of deposit at the central bank, a move aimed at helping the Fed reel in an unprecedented amount of money plowed into the economy during the financial crisis.

(AP Photo/Gerald Herbert, file)

occurs," he said.

"However, if adequate reforms are not made, or if they are made but prove insufficient to prevent dangerous buildups of financial risks, we must remain open to using monetary policy as a supplementary tool," he added. Speculative excesses are not easy to pinpoint in their early stages, he said, and using higher interest rates to combat them can hurt the economy. For instance, rate increases in 2003 and 2004 to constrain the housing bubble could have "seriously weakened" the economy just when a recovery from the 2001 recession was starting, he said.

To help the country emerge from that recession, the Fed under then-Chairman Alan Greenspan cut its key bank lending rate from 6.5 percent in late 2000 to 1 percent in June 2003. It held rates at what was then a record low for a year. It's this action that critics blame for feeding the housing speculation. □

SPORTS

Aruba TODAY

NFL Roundup

Texans rally to beat the Patriots

The Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Rookie Arian Foster scored two touchdowns, Bernard Pollard recovered a fumble for a touchdown and had a key interception as the Texans rallied to beat the New England Patriots 34-27 on Sunday.

The victory gives Houston (9-7) its first winning record and keeps its slim playoff hopes alive. The Texans are primarily competing with Denver, Baltimore and the New York Jets for a wild-card spot. They needed two of those teams to lose to make the first postseason appearance in the eight-year history of the franchise.

The Texans trailed by 14 points in the fourth quarter before ending the game with three unanswered touchdowns. Foster scored the go-ahead TD on a 3-yard run with about 2 minutes remaining.

That score was set up by Pollard's interception and 15-yard return four plays earlier. Tom Brady was hit by Mario Williams as he released the ball. Brady played most of the game despite New England (10-6) having already clinched its playoff spot. League receptions leader Wes Welker started with Brady, but was carted off the field with a left knee injury in the first quarter.

MIAMI (AP) — A swarming Steelers defense sent two Miami quarterbacks to the sideline, including Pat White with a scary head injury, and the reigning Super Bowl champions averted a late collapse.

The Dolphins (7-9), who won the AFC East in 2008, were eliminated with 2 minutes left in the game when Houston beat New England.

Continued on Page 14



Tennessee Titans' Chris Johnson (28) leaps past Seattle Seahawks' Darryl Tapp, upper left, and over teammate Kevin Mawae (68) in the second half, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010, during an NFL football game in Seattle. Johnson passed 2,000 yards in a single season with this run becoming the sixth player in NFL history to reach this milestone. The Titans defeated the Seahawks, 17-13.

Associated Press

USC penalizes men's hoops for violating NCAA rules

investigation found rules were violated during Mayo's one season with the Trojans in 2007-08 under former coach Tim Floyd. Mayo currently plays for the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies. The sanctions announced Sunday call for a one-year ban on postseason play following the current regular season, including the Pac-10 Conference tournament; a loss of one scholarship for this season and the 2010-2011 season; a loss of one coach permitted to engage in off-campus recruiting during the summer of 2010; and 20 less recruiting days (from 130 to 110) allowed for the 2010-2011 academic year.

The school said that because of Mayo's involvement with Rodney Guillory, whom under NCAA rules became a USC booster due to his role in Mayo's recruitment, USC will vacate its 21 victories during the 2007-08 season, when Mayo competed while ineligible. Floyd abruptly quit in June following allegations that he gave \$1,000 in cash to Guillory who helped steer Mayo to the Trojans. Louis Johnson, a former associate of Mayo and Guillory, has previously alleged Guillory received hundreds of thousands of dollars from a sports agency that he partially funneled to Mayo. □



Memphis Grizzlies' O.J. Mayo, right, shoots over Phoenix Suns' Goran Dragic of Slovenia, during the second quarter of an NBA basketball game on Saturday, Jan. 2, 2010, in Phoenix.

LOS ANGELES — Southern California is imposing sanctions on its basketball program for violating NCAA rules involving former player O.J. Mayo. The university's

Source tells AP: Redskins will fire Zorn on Monday

By JOSEPH WHITE

AP Sports Writer

The Washington Redskins plan to fire coach Jim Zorn on Monday, an official within the NFL told The Associated Press.

The Redskins planned to make the move on the day after the end of a disappointing regular season. Washington struggled early despite a weak schedule and finished 4-12 after losing 23-20 in Sunday's finale against the San Diego Chargers.

The official spoke to the AP on Sunday on condition of anonymity because no formal announcement has been made.

"I would not even comment on that," Zorn said after Sunday's game. "There are a lot of things, I'm sure, out there as far as stories. There already has been. So I get that. I'm working on our team meeting, our offseason schedule, and until I'm told that I'm on any other effort, I'm getting ready."

Zorn's dismissal has been expected for months. The front office stripped him of his play-calling duties in late October, and owner Dan Snyder has interviewed assistant coach Jerry Gray for the job, according to the Fritz Pollard Alliance, which monitors minority hiring in the NFL. Gray's interview was an effort to comply with the Rooney Rule, which requires that teams consider a minority candidate for the head coaching position. If the NFL deems that the Rooney Rule has been satisfied, the Redskins are free to act quickly to hire a replacement for Zorn. Former Denver Broncos coach Mike Shanahan is considered the favorite.

Zorn's replacement will be Washington's seventh coach since Snyder bought the team in 1999. □

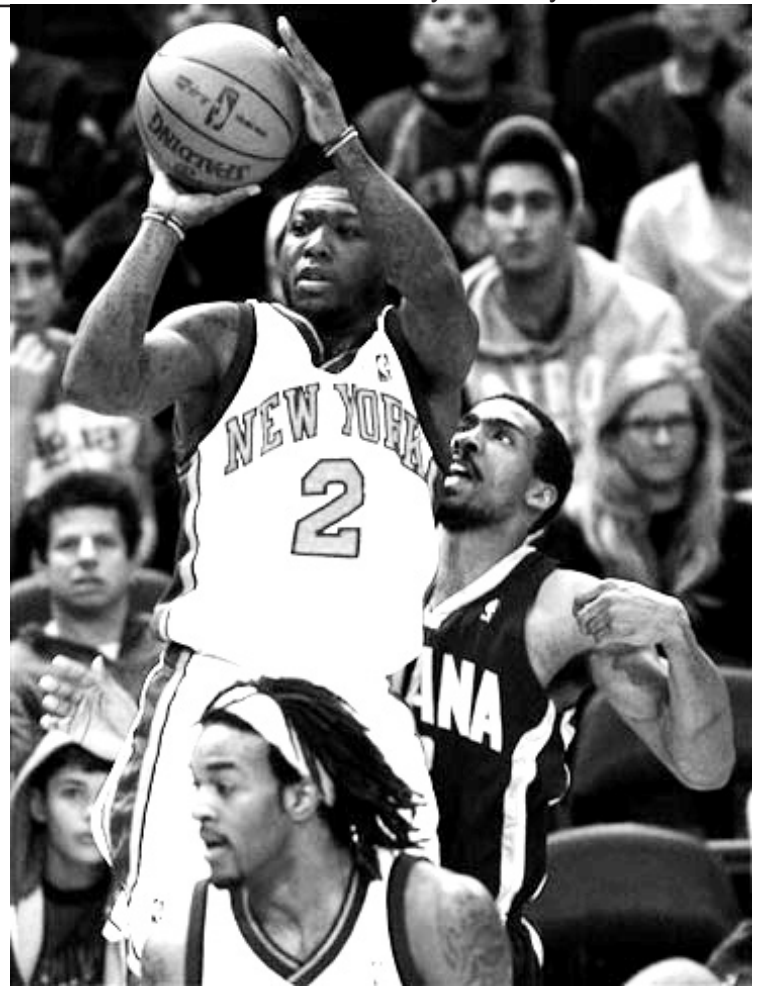
NBA Roundup

Murray's 3-pointer lifts Bobcats past Cavs 91-88

CLEVELAND (AP) — Ronald Murray hit a 3-pointer with 56 seconds left as the Charlotte Bobcats surprised the Cleveland Cavaliers 91-88 on Sunday for only their third road victory this season. The loss snapped the Cavaliers' seven-game win streak and an 11-game winning streak at home. Murray's basket from the top of the key broke an 83-all tie, sparking the Bobcats to their second impressive road win in as many days after a 107-97 win over Miami on Saturday night. Charlotte has dropped 11 of 14 road games this season. Stephen Jackson scored 22 points, Gerald Wallace added 19 and Raymond Felton had

17 for Charlotte. LeBron James, who missed a potential tying 3-pointer from the left corner as time expired, scored 29 points for the Cavs and Mo Williams added 27. Shaquille O'Neal was the only other Cavaliers player in double figures with 10. **Raptors 91, Spurs 86** At Toronto, Chris Bosh scored 22 points to become the leading scorer in Raptors history and help Toronto win its sixth in seven games. Bosh, who also had 15 rebounds, made a jumper from the top of the key with 1:39 left in the third quarter to eclipse Vince Carter's mark of 9,420 points. Bosh now has 9,428 points. Tony Parker scored 23

points and Tim Duncan had 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Spurs, whose win streak was snapped at five games. **Knicks 132, Pacers 89** At New York, Wilson Chandler scored 23 points, and David Lee added 22 points and 16 rebounds, as New York flirted with the biggest victory in franchise history. Danilo Gallinari finished with 20 points and eight rebounds for the Knicks, who led by 48 points — the largest lead in the NBA this season — and won for the 10th time in 15 games. The Knicks' largest victory is by 48 points, done three times. Luther Head scored 18 points for the Pacers. □



New York Knicks' Nate Robinson (2) shoots against Indiana Pacers' Luther Head, right, in the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010, at Madison Square Garden in New York. The Knicks won 132-89.

Associated Press



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NFL ROUNDUP

Continued from Page 12

Houston's win hurt the Steelers' chances. To make the postseason, Pittsburgh (9-7) needed losses or ties by the Ravens, Broncos and Jets in late games Sunday.

Ben Roethlisberger threw three touchdown passes, but the stadium grew silent when White was carted off the field with a head injury following a helmet-to-helmet collision with cornerback Ike Taylor.

White moved his arms and legs before leaving the field after an eight-minute delay. A team spokesman said White "seems to be OK in terms of movement," but is being examined at the hospital.

Miami starter Chad Henne sat out the second half with an eye injury, and when the rookie White departed with 2 minutes left in the third quarter, Tyler Thigpen made his first appearance for the Dolphins. They trailed 27-10, but Thigpen led touchdown drives on his first two series.

Roethlisberger appeared to favor his throwing arm late in the game, but led Pittsburgh on a 14-play, 83-yard drive. It ended with Jeff Reed's third field goal for a 30-24 lead with 40 seconds left.

Taylor intercepted Thigpen on Miami's next play to seal Pittsburgh's third consecutive

win.

Vikings 44, Giants 7

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Brett Favre passed for 316 yards and four touchdowns without a turnover in less than three quarters against the barely there Giants (8-8).

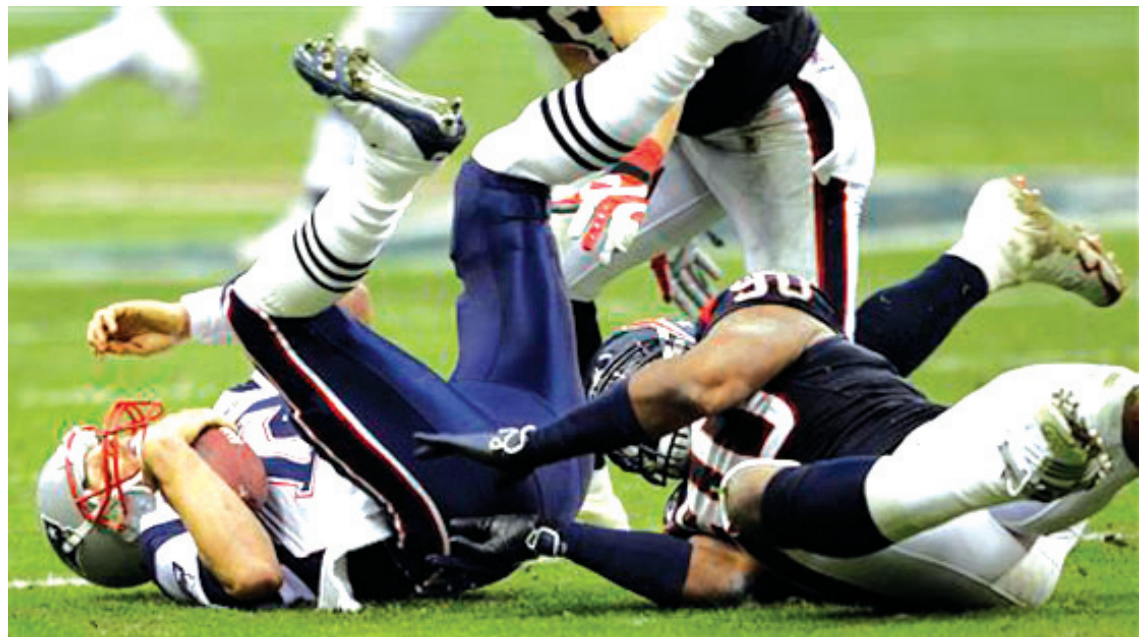
Controlling the game from the very first drive against a Giants team sitting five players who started at least four games this season, the NFC North champion Vikings (12-4) cruised into the locker room to start watching the Philadelphia-Dallas game with an eye on their seed for the NFC playoffs.

They needed an Eagles loss to finish second behind sputtering New Orleans and get a first-round bye, and throughout the second half the crowd broke into "Let's go Cowboys!" chants.

Favre and coach Brad Childress appeared determined to regain this team's confidence after a December slump, with the Vikings attempting 35 passes and running only 22 times during the first three quarters. Sidney Rice caught six passes for 112 yards and two scores, and tight end Visanthe Shiancoe had seven receptions for 94 yards and a touchdown, all in the first half. Adrian Peterson scored his 18th touchdown.

Bills 30, Colts 7

The Brad crunch



Houston Texans defensive end Mario Williams (90) sacks New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (12) during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010, in Houston. The Texans won 34-27 for their first winning season.

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, New York (AP) — Despite near whiteout conditions in the first half, Ryan Fitzpatrick threw three touchdown passes for Buffalo (6-10), including a 41-yarder to Terrell Owens. Fred Jackson had 212 yards rushing, the seventh-highest rushing total in team history, to reach 1,000 yards for the first time in his career, and also scored on an 11-yard catch.

And give Mother Nature credit for providing a snow-globe effect to create a picturesque backdrop to what was a meaningless game for both teams.

The Colts (14-2) rested numerous starters, then benched many more, including Manning, in the second quarter. They have a two-week break before opening the playoffs as the AFC's top-seeded team. Starting defensive ends Dwight Freeney and Robert Mathis were among numerous regulars who didn't play.

Coming off a 29-17 loss at home to the New York Jets last weekend, the Colts squandered a chance to become the sixth NFL team to win 15 games in one season. Indianapolis also had a franchise-best 11-game road win streak snapped.

With seven receptions, Dallas Clark became the NFL's second tight end to have a 100-catch season, joining Tony Gonzalez. Reggie Wayne had five catches to reach 100 for the second time in his career.

Panthers 23, Saints 10

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (AP) — Saints backups gave with an ugly performance that sends the No. 1 seed in the NFC to the postseason on a three-game losing streak.

Jonathan Stewart rushed for 125 yards and a touchdown and the Panthers finished their disappointing season 8-8, winning their final three. □



America's Melanie Oudin, left, and John Isner talk to each other during their mixed doubles match against Spain's Maria Jose Martinez Sanchez and Tommy Robredo, losing 6-4, 7-5 at the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth, Australia, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010.

Associated Press

PERTH, Australia (AP) — Tommy Robredo and Maria Jose Martinez Sanchez each

Spain beats U.S. 3-0 at Hopman

won their singles matches before combining successfully in mixed doubles to give Spain a 3-0 win over the United States at the Hopman Cup on Sunday.

Robredo beat John Isner 6-7 (5), 6-3, 7-6 (4) after Maria Jose Martinez Sanchez beat American Melanie Oudin 6-4, 6-4 to give Spain a 1-0 lead. After Robredo's singles win, Martinez Sanchez and Robredo beat the American pair 6-4, 7-5 to complete the victory.

In the singles match, Robredo took a 3-0 lead in the final set tiebreaker but Isner fought back to level it at 4-4 before Robredo won the final three points to clinch the match.

Robredo, who won the 2002 Hopman Cup for Spain with Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, had

difficulty dealing with the American's serve. Isner had 16 aces in the match.

"It's really tough," Robredo said. "When the ball bounces high it's really tough to hit." Martinez Sanchez, a serve-and-volleyer, had her service broken by Oudin, the 18-year-old U.S. Open quarterfinalist, for the first time while serving for the match at 5-2. In the final game, the Spanish player faced two break points before clinching the match.

Martinez Sanchez said she was physically ill on Sunday morning with an unknown ailment.

"But now I'm much better, I have to eat and get ready for the next match," she said. "I was winning 5-2 and you have some doubts but in the end ... I could win."

On Monday, Britain, led by No. 4 Andy Murray, plays Kazakhstan, while Germany takes on Russia in Group B matches.

Murray will team with 15-year-old Laura Robson against the Kazakhstan pair of Andrey Golubev and Yaroslava Shvedova.

Murray has altered his Australian Open preparations this year, giving up a chance to defend his crown at Doha, Qatar in order to get used to Australian conditions before arriving in Melbourne.

The 22-year-old Murray has won the past two titles in Doha and reached the final in 2007, but has failed to make it past the Australian Open's round of 16 in that time.

Murray felt he would harm his chances in Melbourne if he

played in Doha again.

"It's a bit to do with the heat (in Australia) but also jetlag," Murray said on Sunday. "Because I played well in Doha I finished on Saturday night ... and didn't arrive in Australia until Tuesday morning or late Monday evening."

"Then you only get two or three days decent practice in before the tournament. So I just wanted to get here a little bit earlier to get used to the heat, to get over the jetlag and get used to the courts because the surface is a lot different to the one in Doha."

In Group A, Spain and Romania have 1-0 records while Australia, which lost to Romania 2-1 on Saturday, and the U.S. are 0-1. The top teams in each group meet in next Saturday's final. □

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Federer says he can be unbeatable again

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Roger Federer expects to carry on his momentum from the middle of 2009 into the new year now that his back injury from last season has fully healed.

The Swiss star lost to Andy Murray, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic early last year before recovering to reach the final in all four Grand Slam events, winning his first French Open and then Wimbledon for his 15th major title to surpass Pete Sampras' record.

In the first month of 2009, Federer lost to Murray in Doha and Nadal in the Australian Open final, before pulling out injured from a Davis Cup series against the United States in February. In March, Djokovic beat Federer in the Miami semifinals.

"Last year, I had problem at the start of the season with my back," Federer said Sunday. "I lost to Murray, Djokovic and Rafa, who got the better of me at the start of the season. But I feel fine now because I have been practicing enough to feel confident of winning."

Federer's Roland Garros victory gave him a career Grand Slam, while the Wimbledon win helped take the No. 1 ranking from Nadal. He then reached the

U.S. Open final, only to lose to Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina, but ended the season with four titles.

"I got better and better as the season went on," Federer said. "I was able to bounce back and was on a roll. (Winning in) Paris and Wimbledon showed that I was unbeatable. I can do it again. That's a good feeling to have, that I can do it again."

The Qatar Open starts Monday and Federer, a two-time champion, will meet Christophe Rochus of Belgium in his first match. He is drawn to play sixth-ranked Nikolay Davdyenko of Russia, who won the season-ending London World Tour Finals in November, in the quarterfinals. "It is hard to be competing against the best, but I know I can win more tournaments this year," said Federer, who finished third Saturday in the season-opening Capitala exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

"I have been practicing good. The end season was short, so I feel my game is where it is supposed to be. I know I can make a few adjustments to my game and play well again."

Nadal, who leads 13-7 over Federer in their head-to-



Switzerland's Roger Federer serves the ball to Spain's David Ferrer during the final day of the Capitala Tennis Championships in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Saturday, Jan. 2, 2010.

Associated Press

head record, won the Abu Dhabi exhibition final by ending a two-match losing run to Robin Soderling. The Swede beat Nadal at the 2009 French Open, where the Spaniard had been unbeaten since 2005.

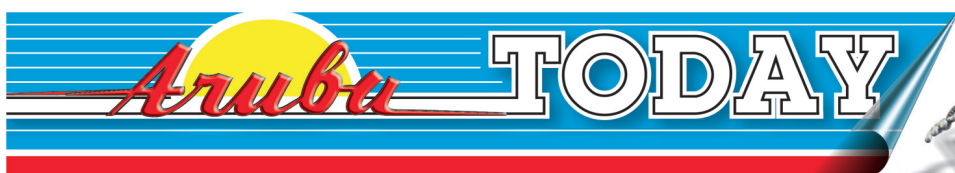
"I got three matches in Abu

Dhabi. I felt good on court. I was moving well on the court," Nadal said.

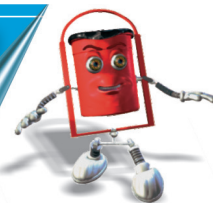
Nadal had chronic injuries to both knees and an abdominal complaint last season, forcing him to miss Wimbledon. Asked about his condition, the Spaniard

replied: "I am OK. I feel fine. I just want to play my best tennis in every match I play. That's my goal."

The 10th-ranked Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France withdrew Friday from the event because of a wrist injury. □



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NHL Roundup

Kovalev scores 4 in Senators' 7-4 win over Flyers



Ottawa Senators' Alex Kovalev (27), of Russia, celebrates his fourth goal of the game with teammate Mike Fisher (12) as Philadelphia Flyers' Simon Gagne (12), Claude Giroux (28), Mike Richards (18) and goaltender Brian Boucher (33) look on during the third period of an NHL hockey game in Ottawa, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010. The Senators won 7-4.

Associated Press

OTTAWA (AP)—Alex Kovalev broke a lengthy scoring slump with a career-best four goals and an assist to lift the Ottawa Senators to a 7-4 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers in the NHL on

Sunday.

The Senators jumped out to a 4-1 lead before squandering it, then ran away with three third-period goals.

Kovalev scored his first goals in 11

games, dating to a hat trick on Dec. 12 against Carolina. It was his 12th NHL hat trick.

His first goal came against Flyers starter Michael Leighton, who was replaced by Brian Boucher after giving up two goals on five shots. Ottawa's Pascal Leclaire allowed three goals on 10 shots before being relieved by Brian Elliott.

Chris Kelly had his first career two-goal game for the Senators, who won for the fourth time in five games. Jarkko Ruutu added a goal and an assist, and Ryan Shannon and Anton Volchenkov had three assists each.

Arron Asham had a goal and assist, and Ian Laperriere Darroll Powe and Mike Richards scored on the power play for the Flyers.

Sabres 1, Canadiens 0

At Montreal, Ryan Miller posted his fifth shutout of the season and Tim Connolly scored the lone goal as Buffalo beat Montreal to extend its winning streak to four.

Miller turned aside 30 shots—including Mike Cammalleri's one-timer with just over 12 seconds remaining — for his

second straight win since being chosen for the U.S. Olympic team on Friday. It was his 17th shutout in 299 NHL regular-season games.

Connolly scored his fourth goal in four games in the second period for Buffalo, which has won 14 of 20 (14-4-2) since Nov. 27.

Carey Price made 29 saves for Montreal.

Panthers 6, Penguins 2

At Sunrise, Florida, Radek Dvorak scored three goals for his third NHL hat trick and Tomas Vokoun stopped 46 shots as Florida sent Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh to its season-high, fifth straight loss.

Rostislav Olesz, Jordan Leopold and Steven Reinprecht also scored for the Panthers, who rallied from a 2-0 deficit and snapped a three-game losing streak. Nathan Horton, Michael Frolik and Gregory Campbell each had two assists.

Sidney Crosby and Tyler Kennedy scored first-period goals, and Marc-Andre Fleury made 29 saves for Pittsburgh, which has lost six of seven.

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"fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on

the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35 ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50 ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on a daily basis from 8am to

Catch your own dinner

12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm. A charter includes: captain, mate, all fishing equipment, bait, sodas and bottled water. On a full day charter sandwiches and snacks are also included. You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com.

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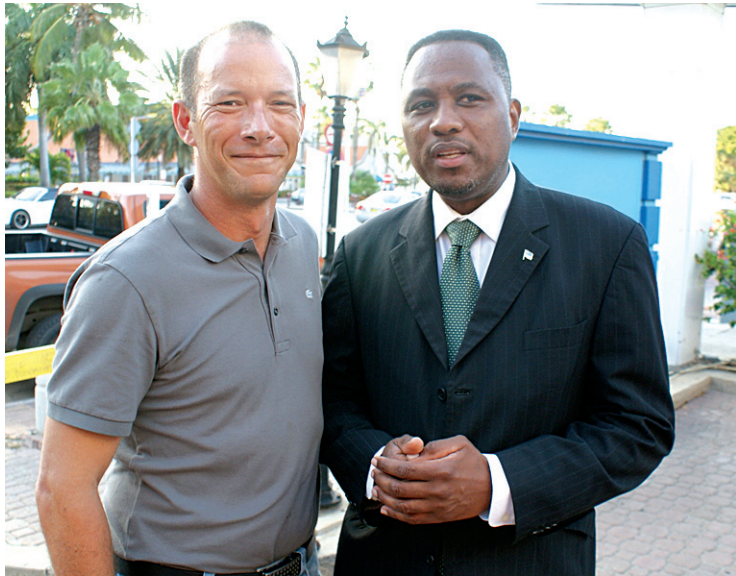
www.driftwoodaruba.com

Opening hours: every day, but Tuesdays from 5pm till 10:30pm.



As the old goes out, the young year comes merrily in

PricewaterhouseCoopers escorts the old year out



ORANJESTAD – Let's Celebrate and Move On, said the invitation summoning office staff, clients, friends and family members to the parking lot at the heart of town as PricewaterhouseCoopers staged a fun yearend affair with Papito Raphael, Long Roy & Chicho Kock, concocting a Molotov cocktail of music and dance.

Page B2

At the Home of Minister Richard Visser

May this New Year bring many gifts



MALMOK -- Friends and family members rang in the New Year at the private residence of Minister Richard Visser. The music by a gypsy violin virtuoso, matched the exotic tropical ambiance of the garden and the elevated spirits sustained by oriental-inspired food, champagne and fireworks.

Pages B8 & 9

Winter WHITE holiday for the first Unox Nieuwjaarsduik



MOOMBA - With the water temperature a very nice, refreshing 20 degrees Celcius, participants at the first Unox Nieuwjaarsduik experienced no hardship at all last Friday. About three hundred swimmers ran shouting

from glee into the ocean at MooMba Beach, where the event took place at noon. After their balmy dip, the swimmers lined up for a well deserved cup of Unox pea soup, a Dutch treat on icy cold winter days.

Page B4

Getting to Know the Radisson & Aruba



PALM BEACH -- Carlson Wagonlit Travel president and CEO Hubert Joly, has just arrived on the island for a short visit, as part of his "getting to know you," orientation. Joly

is the first non-family member to run Carlson when he took over the reigns of the company in March 2008, succeeding Marilyn Carlson Nelson, the company co-owner.

Mid 2009, Joly also took over Carlson's hotels division, which has become the company's main focus in the last year and a half.

Continued on Page B3

As the old goes out, the young year comes merrily in

PricewaterhouseCoopers escorts the old year out



May you have a great New Year! ☐



ORANJESTAD – Let's Celebrate and Move On, said the invitation summoning office staff, clients, friends and family members to the parking lot at the heart of town as PricewaterhouseCoopers staged a fun yearend affair with Papito Raphael, Long Roy & Chicho Kock, concocting

a Molotov cocktail of music and dance. Senior partner Edsel Lopez wished his guests new hope at the dawning of the New Year, open new horizons and promises of brighter tomorrows, as Scandals catered delicious snacks and poured bottomless cocktails



Getting to Know the Radisson & Aruba




Continued from Page B1
The Minneapolis-based Carlson Hotels Worldwide is the world's 9th largest hotel company, with more than 1,050 hotels across five brands in 77 countries. As a matter of fact the majority of Carlson Hotels' revenue

comes from its upscale Radisson chain, whose Aruban flagship, the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa, fondly referred to as La Grande Dame, has been a hospitality legend for the past 50 years. Joly's mission in Aruba is to get to know the island and the hotel staff, as they are all part of his major expansion and investment plan, as the hotel industry and the business world continue to recover from global economic slump.

The revamped Radisson in Aruba will be prepared when the downward economic cycle ends, he stated. Also traveling with Joly, Gordon McKinnon Chief Branding Officer for Carlson Hotels Worldwide. The dignitaries toured the resort and met the staff under the guidance of General Manager Rob Smith, who is seen here in our pictures welcoming the VIPS to the island. □





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Winter WHITE holiday for the first Unox Nieuwjaarsduik



MOOMBA - With the water temperature a very nice, refreshing 20 degrees Celcius, participants at the first Unox Nieuwjaarsduik experienced no hardship at all last Friday.



About three hundred swimmers ran shouting from glee into the ocean at MooMba Beach, where the event took place at noon. After their balmy dip, the swimmers lined up for a well deserved cup of Unox pea soup, a Dutch treat on icy cold winter days.

Manager Menno Conijn of

MooMba Beach was really happy with the turn-out: "The first 160 hats were all gone in a flash, and many participants had to make their dip bare-headed. Next year we'll need many more of the woolly hats," he said. Participants at the swim were mainly interns, but quite a lot of locals and

enthusiastic tourists joined in as well. The first Unox Nieuwjaarsduik was a great success. □



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The Marsman Family throws a traditional Year End Party



BUBALI-- Family members and friends of Henk & Kaye Marsman were invited to celebrate the end of another exciting year, take a moment to reflect on past events, and give thanks for friendship, love and support.

This year has been extra special for the Marsmans as the family grew with the addition of a baby daughter, Kristen.

The Year End Paranda at Bubali, on the dental practice premises, enjoyed the musical entertainment of Grupo di Betico, and delectable snacks over cocktails. At the end of the evening the family's younger generation blew up a pagara, and fireworks, welcoming the fresh New Year in with a loud bang



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Hip Hip Hurray for Carmen

La Reina de Boardwalk celebrates her birthday with cake and a pagara



BAKVAL - Carmen de Ledezma Casado, alias La Reina de Boardwalk, celebrated her 56th birthday with cake, snacks and a pagara last Thursday, December 31. The lovely lady from the Dominican Republic did this in the company of her daughter Yesenia and friends at The Boardwalk, the awesome boutique hotel across from the Marriott Resort.

Having worked at The Boardwalk for 17 years now, Carmen considers it her home away from home. Guests know and love her, and her smile lights up the place every day of the week.

We want to wish Carmen a very happy new year: pabien from colleagues, guests and friends. ☐



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matinee: 12.00 2.00

G THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG
daily: 4.30
matinee: 12.00 2.15

PG-13 2012
daily: 8.00
late show: 11.15

PG-13 DID YOY HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS
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matinee: 12.30 2.45

PG-13 AVATAR 3D
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matinee: 1.30 late show: 11.15 **3D**

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The French Steakhouse delivers dining under the stars



Eagle Beach – The French Steakhouse at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa just added another charming dining option, a tropical outdoor courtyard, featuring delicious cuisine under the stars. The famed French Steakhouse prides itself on the elegant dining experience it offers patrons in the fully air-conditioned dining room. Yet recently the idea of adding a garden spot to the existing blueprint began to sprout in the creative mind of Executive Chef George Hoek, and he immediately recruited the landscapers to create the

intimate, lovely setting. The French Steakhouse Ooh-La-La menu is now served indoor and alfresco, featuring creative appetizers, soups, salads, seafood dishes, poultry and the Pièce de Résistance South American & USDA Beef specialties. Among popular appetizers the chef's Tropical Crab Cakes with pineapple & mango salsa and the Teriyaki Glazed Seared Duck Breast, served with garden greens and balsamic dressing, are real crowd pleasers. True to the restaurant's French roots, the Onion Soup

is a classic, while the Honey Glazed Salmon Salad winks at the exotic East with a sweet soy dressing. The menu features a great variety of seafood dishes from fresh fish to the totally sinful and amazingly-decadent Caribbean Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat and Bacon, which became an instant hit. The tequila and sweet chili glaze, lends the Jumbo shrimp a pure taste of heaven!



The French Steakhouse is naturally famous for the South American Churrasco steak, a signature preparation, which now shares the stage with juicy USDA beef specialties such as NY Sirloin and Filet Mignon. Light-eaters will find the Jerk Chicken Skewers and the Lemon Herb Broilers very satisfying. Open seven days a week from 5:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. the French Steakhouse is blessed with the nicest staff and a delightfully renovated dining

room with sparkling China, crisp linen, an interesting bread basket, colossal desserts and live jazz on piano with Eddy Samson who is Aruba's best entertainer, and a walking & breathing music encyclopedia, just whistle the tune, and Eddy will produce a symphonic version of your favorite song. Hungry patrons will appreciate the Ambassador's 5-course menu featuring the run of the menu highlights for just \$34.95 per person. www.manchebo.com steakhouse

Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar reinvents Beach Cuisine



Eagle Beach – Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is widely recognized as the home of Beach Cuisine. Executive Chef George Hoek and his culinary team serve a Sun Splashed menu on the ocean front terrace, raising the restaurant to a must-visit, must-try status.



The contemporary menu, lists many favorite dishes from around the world, borrowing inspiration from US, Mexican, Thai, Jamaican, Cuban, Greek and Mediterranean kitchens, all served with a tropical, Caribbean flair. From Sun-Sational Salads, to

Cuban pressed jawbreakers and wraps, mid-day platters also include oversize Beef Burgers, Philly Cheese Steak Sandwiches and Hot Dogs. The Pega Pega tropical & frozen cocktail list, with fresh fruit or ice cream smoothies, daiquiris, coladas and margaritas, leaves nothing out, including Yellow Birds, Sex on the Beach and Mudslides, making a lunch-time brain-freeze, extremely easy to get! The Pega Pega, one of Aruba oldest beach bars is open on fabulous Eagle Beach, with unrivaled views, caring, gracious service, and relaxed atmosphere, from 12 noon to 5 p.m. The bar is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.



Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano introduces Menu Turistico

Eagle Beach -- Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano located at the heart of the low-rise hotels at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa, delivers authentic Mediterranean flavors, at a reasonable price.

The restaurant has just introduced Menu Turistico a three-course dinner featuring appetizers, main courses and desserts for just \$19.95, per person, plus 15% service charge.

Patrons may choose between home made soup and Caesar salad, Fettuccini Alfredo, Lasagna Casarecia, Spaghetti alla Bolognese or any favorite pizza with Tiramisu, Cheese Cake or Ice Cream for the sweet finale.

Executive Chef George Hoek is the resort's much-appreciated culinary expert. He was the recent recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by the Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association in collaboration with the Digicel Group. Chef George accepted the Shoco Award, the national award of excellence, and Aruba's top professional decoration, in the tourism industry. □

At the Home of Minister Richard Visser

May this New Year bring many gifts



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MALMOK -- Friends and family members rang in the New Year at the private residence of Minister Richard Visser. The music by a gypsy violin virtuoso, matched the exotic tropical

ambiance of the garden and the elevated spirits sustained by oriental-inspired food, champagne and fireworks. Pictured here Richard & Lynn Visser welcoming the New Year, and their friends, into their home: May this



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The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but Texas de Brazil's version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more.

The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, Texas de Brazil will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

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A fairy tale story of lasting love at first sight:

George & Sue Menkes renew their vows in Aruba



PALMBEACH - On Wednesday, December 30, George and Sue Menkes celebrated a life-long love affair at the commencement of their 40th year of wedded bliss. They chose this time and place as they have vacationed on Aruba at holiday time for the past 20 years; this year being the first time they were able to have all those that they loved most in life join them for this special occasion.

George and Sue have owned timesharing for the past six years at the Divi Phoenix Resort. "Last year we noticed

they were putting the finishing touches on the new section of the Divi Phoenix, and I got a great idea," reveals George. "I spoke to Doug Kuhn here at the Phoenix, and he was more than cooperative in arranging us to rent three units so our children, Adam and Lauren, and their spouses, Julie and Andrew, along with our grandchildren, could all be with us when we renewed our vows. We are also very close with Julie's parents, Carl and Doris, and Julie's sister Amy and her husband, so it is one big happy family;

something we don't expect to be able to repeat anytime soon."

The renewal ceremony was touchingly conducted by Rabbi Dr. Mario Gurevich of Aruba's Temple Beth Israel, and the "bride and groom" were so overcome with emotion as they talked of their loving history together, it was often difficult for them to speak the words of their vows.

"From the moment I saw you on the bridge at the U of Hartford with paint brush in hand and life as your canvas, I knew at that moment I wanted to always be a part of your life," George told Sue and the gathering. Sue, an art student who eventually became an art teacher, was plying her trade to earn extra money to help with her education, which was funded by a scholarship. They met as freshmen at 17, and have been together since. An understanding dean, realizing they were very much in love and needed to save money by marrying in their senior year so as to save separate dorm fees, allowed Sue's living allowance to be applied to their shared apartment.

Sue recalled that when she first saw George "I thought he was the cutest boy I had ever seen. He was with a group of friends, but I only saw him." In her vows she declared "I remember the feeling of my heart beating so fast when I saw you; it was the beginning of a chemistry between us that



we still have to this day. You always make me feel so loved by the respect you show me and the support you give me. Always, to this day, you make me feel like I am the only one you need and want. There is no one like you and their never will be," she concluded.

Rabbi Dr. Gurevich had their two children and spouses act as the pillars of the huppa, the traditional wedding canopy, as the couple completed their vows and sipped the symbolic cup of wine, sometimes referred to as the "Cup of Life". The sweetness of the wine symbolizes the sweetness wished upon the couple, while sharing the cup of wine represents sharing whatever the future holds, whether bitter or sweet. After a few attempts, George managed

the traditional breaking of the glass, which completes the Jewish wedding ceremony, and the Rabbi led all the gathering in a rendition of "Mazel Tov."

Sue and George were attended by Adam's children, Kayla and Andrew, as flower girl and ring bearer, with little Spencer a busy presence throughout the ceremony. Tears flowed freely as emotion overcame them during this simple and loving ceremony; a perfect Aruban sunset was a dramatic background sparkling on the turquoise Caribbean Sea and the tears streaking down their cheeks. "I loved you then, I love you now, and I will always love you forever and ever" they declared. After nearly 40 years, Sue and George are an inspiration of wedded bliss for us all. □



While Pilapil is still in Curacao

Bodies of 6 seamen who died in ship fire flown in

By Jerome Aning

MANILA, Philippines -- The remains of six Filipino seamen who died on board a Greek-owned ship that caught fire off

Venezuela on Dec. 25 were flown to Manila on Saturday night following repatriation efforts by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The wooden crates containing the caskets bearing the remains of Bonifacio Vallescas, Reo Arias, Danilo Esparagoza, Noel Lagamon, Bryan

Pragama and Jerry Espanola arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at around 7 p.m. Saturday on a chartered Boeing DC 8 flight.

Wailing family members and relatives hugged each other, some flinging themselves on wooden boxes, as the boxes were being offloaded at the NAIA cargo terminal.

"He's supposed to arrive tomorrow (Jan. 3) so that we could be together at last. Why did it turn out this way?" said Vallescas' wife Marie, who recounted that her 32-year-old husband earlier decided to give up being a seaman and work here in the country.

Pragama's brother Dennis, meanwhile, recounted how he was still able to speak to his brother during Christmas day in Manila. "It's very sad. We never imagined it would come to this," he said.

Jocelyn Guiritan, a representative of the seafarers' manning agency Sea Power, said the families of the victims have been given an initial US\$1,000 for burial expenses. She said the agency would be processing the death benefits for each sailor worth US\$50,000.

The Filipinos were on board the MV Aegean Wind that caught fire on Christmas day while on sail in Venezuelan waters. The fire resulted in nine deaths, including the six Filipinos and three Greeks

sailors.

Two Filipinos seafarers, Mark San Jose and Cromwell Pilapil, were injured. San Jose arrived in Manila earlier while Pilapil is still hospitalized in Curacao in the Netherlands Antilles. Seven other Filipino seafarers who survived are still in Venezuelan capital Caracas for the ongoing investigation. Accompanying the grieving relatives at the airport were DFA Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) executive director Enrico Fos and other officials of the DFA and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Earlier Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo ordered the DFA migrant affairs office to coordinate efforts with the Philippine embassies in Caracas and Athens, Greece to help the Filipinos.

Caracas-based Philippine consul general Jose Ampeso was sent to Curacao to coordinate with the manning agency stationed there while in Athens, consul general Constancio Vingno coordinated with the Greek ship owners.

Philippine ambassador to Venezuela Jocelyn Batoon-Garcia coordinated with the authorities in Caracas and sought the assistance of her Dutch counterpart. □

Bonaire angry with Dutch deputy minister

The island administration of Bonaire has written in complaint to Deputy Minister of Kingdom Relationships Ank Bijleveld because she stopped the flow of money to the Dutch Antilles island. Ms Bijleveld believes Bonaire has failed to fulfil its obligations to introduce reforms.

The island was meant to hold a referendum on the future of the island's relationship with the Netherlands. The status of Bonaire is due to

change this year as the island becomes a Dutch municipality rather than fall under the current Dutch Antilles administration.

Bonaire says the deputy minister is meddling in local matters and is trying to influence the outcome of the poll. The island's administration is also angry that Ms Bijleveld is withholding money earmarked for education and health, which have nothing to do with Bonaire's new status. □

A price to pay

The recent terrorist incident on a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit has led to a discussion on the mandatory use of so-called "full-body scanners" at airports so passengers can be checked better before boarding a plane. Up to now some 15 such devices already present at Schiphol airport in the Netherlands mostly have been used on a voluntary basis because of European regulations and privacy concerns, as the X-ray image, of course, shows people without their clothes.

The Dutch Government now has decided to go ahead and use the body scanners in a mandatory manner at Schiphol on flights to the United States. This will not be the case for flights within Europe, as that would require approval of the European Union (EU).

To what extent the use of body scanners would really help prevent such incidents is a question best answered by experts. For now, there are twice as many departure gates at Schiphol with flights to the US as the available number of body scanners anyway, so they certainly won't be used for every such flight.

The Netherlands Antilles is no stranger to the body scanner,

of course, as it was and still is being used at the insistence of the same Dutch Government against "bolita swallowers" smuggling drugs from the islands to the Netherlands. In this case the use both at Curaçao's Hato airport and/or on arrival at Schiphol is certainly not voluntary, but based on selection by law enforcement officials.

The real, underlying debate is to what extent people are willing to give up their privacy in exchange for heightened safety. This discussion is not limited to the use of body scanners or air travel, but also involves, for example, surveillance cameras being installed in public places all over the world for security reasons, as is the case in St. Maarten. Granted, such surveillance cameras don't – or at least are not supposed to – look through people's clothes. At the same time, Antillean law basically allows the taking and publishing of photographs without permission of people in public places, which would even include, for example, one's car as far as what's visible from outside the vehicle.

Nevertheless, concern over not so much the video

surveillance, but what is done with the images, is not unwarranted. After all, it is not inconceivable that such material might end up in the wrong hands to be used, for example, when it involves somebody famous or in a domestic dispute, similar to what already occurred locally when a then-prosecutor requested telephone records for private reasons.

In general authorities need to take safeguarding the data from surveillance equipment very seriously, so the public can have some confidence that it will be used only as intended: to fight crime. How that translates to daily practice in terms of by whom, how and under what regulations and circumstances the material can be accessed and stored should be made crystal clear, not just among authorities, but to the public at large. It's a sobering thought going into the New Year and decade, but in today's "Brave New World" privacy is by necessity becoming an increasingly scarce commodity. Then again, security concerns appear to be growing very real, so more and more people all around the globe seem to believe that it's all worth it. □



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Cifra de muertos por deslaves en Brasil aumenta a 76



Los deslaves e inundaciones han dejado al menos 29 personas muertas en el estado brasileño de Río de Janeiro, y las autoridades temen que puedan aumentar las víctimas. REUTERS/Bruno Domingos

México captura a hermano de líder narco muerto Beltrán Leyva

MEXICO DF (Reuters) - Autoridades mexicanas dijeron el sábado que capturaron días atrás a Carlos Beltrán Leyva, hermano del líder narco Arturo Beltrán Leyva, abatido a tiros en un enfrentamiento con la Armada a mediados de diciembre.

La Secretaría de Seguridad Pública federal dijo en un comunicado que Beltrán Leyva fue detenido con documentación falsa el 30 de diciembre, pero no estaba claro si tenía cargos por narcotráfico o lavado de dinero. Un portavoz de la fiscalía federal dijo que ésta no había sido notificada oficialmente aún sobre la detención. La muerte de Arturo Beltrán Leyva es considerada uno de los mayores golpes a los poderosos cárteles del narcotráfico en el Gobierno del conservador Felipe Calderón, que libra una guerra abierta contra estas bandas desde que asumió, en diciembre del 2006.

Beltrán Leyva, apodado "el Barbas" o "el Jefe de jefes" era señalado como responsable de gran parte de la violencia del narcotráfico, que de acuerdo con conteos de la prensa dejó más de 7,000 muertos en el 2009, aunque no existen aún cifras oficiales.

Los cárteles se enfrentan entre sí y con fuerzas de seguridad por las lucrativas rutas de las drogas con destino principalmente a Estados Unidos, el mayor consumidor de estupefacientes del mundo.

Otros hermanos del clan de los Beltrán Leyva, oriundos del estado de Sinaloa, donde se cultiva marihuana y amapola, siguen libres. Los Beltrán Leyva fueron aliados y ahora son enemigos de Joaquín "el Chapo" Guzmán, el líder narco más buscado del país, a quien acusan de haber entregado a las autoridades a Alfredo "el Mochomo" Beltrán Leyva, capturado en enero del 2008. □

SAO PAULO (Reuters) - Al menos 76 personas murieron por inundaciones y deslaves en los tres mayores estados de Brasil durante los últimos cuatro días, reportó el domingo el diario O Estado de S. Paulo.

El número de víctimas fatales en el estado de Río de Janeiro se elevó a 63. Bomberos y trabajadores de rescate removieron 18 cuerpos de un pequeño hotel y residencias que fueron destruidas temprano el viernes, cuando una colina colapsó en la lujosa zona vacacional Angra dos Reis, indicó el diario, tras citar autoridades.

Diez personas perdieron la vida en el estado de Sao Paulo, el más poblado del país. Tres personas murieron en Minas Gerais, donde las intensas lluvias causaron inundaciones y deslizamientos de tierra.

Equipos de rescate pasaron el sábado y las primeras horas del domingo buscando víctimas en Angra, donde hasta 41 personas fueron halladas muertas, indicó el periódico O Estado.

El Gobierno advirtió a los turistas que abandonen Angra, la cercana Ilha Grande y otras zonas turísticas en la costa sur del estado de Río. Material de televisión mostró a los trabajadores de rescate removiendo el lodo del pequeño hotel de Sankay y hogares aledaños, que fueron enterrados por una montaña de barro marrón rojizo. Hasta el momento, no ha habido reportes de víctimas fatales extranjeras.

Luego de un breve receso del mal clima el domingo, se prevén más lluvias para los próximos días en el sector. □

Volcán Galeras de Colombia hace erupción



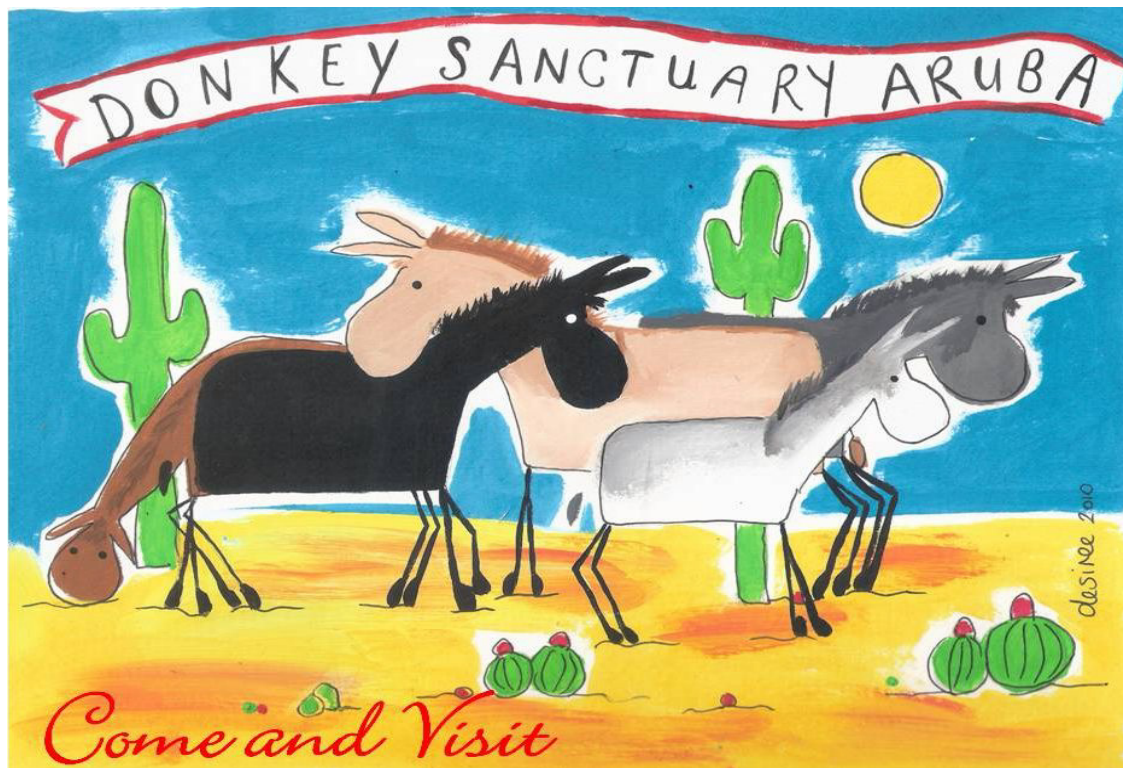
Foto de Carlos Beltrán Leyva luego de su arresto en Sinaloa, México. REUTERS/Policia Federal.

informa que el día 2 de enero de 2010 a las 7:43 p.m. (0043 GMT), se registró una erupción del volcán Galeras de carácter explosivo", dijo un comunicado oficial.

Las autoridades elevaron el nivel de alerta a rojo o uno, que significa que existe una erupción inminente o en curso.

El evento vulcanológico se presentó en momentos en que miles de personas participan en el tradicional Carnaval de Negros y Blancos que se realiza anualmente en la ciudad de Pasto. En anteriores oportunidades los habitantes de la zona reportaron la aparición de una densa columna de humo sobre el cráter y la caída de cenizas después de los eventos eruptivos.

Alrededor de 8.000 personas viven en la zona de riesgo del volcán, pero siempre se han negado a salir hacia albergues provisionales. Pasto, con unos 400.000 habitantes, está ubicada en las inmediaciones del volcán, pero fuera de la zona de riesgo. □



Justicia Perú confirma condena ex presidente Fujimori

LIMA (Reuters) - La Justicia peruana confirmó por unanimidad la condena de 25 años de prisión al ex presidente Alberto Fujimori por la muerte de 25 personas durante una guerra sucia contra la guerrilla en la década de 1990, rechazando el recurso de nulidad presentado por su defensa.

La sentencia condenatoria dictada en abril del año pasado fue la primera por casos de violación a los derechos humanos contra un presidente elegido en las urnas y juzgado en su propio país en Latinoamérica.

La Corte Suprema de Justicia "confirmó por unanimidad la condena de 25 años de prisión impuesta al ex presidente Alberto Fujimori como autor mediato de los delitos de homicidio calificado -asesinato- y

lesiones graves", afirmó la Justicia en un comunicado divulgado en la madrugada del domingo.

El abogado del ex mandatario, César Nakazaki, rechazó la decisión de la Justicia del país andino y dijo que seguirán "luchando" para conseguir la nulidad de la sentencia condenatoria. Por otro lado, en los casos de secuestro en agravio del periodista Gustavo Gorriti y el empresario Samuel Dyer Ampudia, la sala ratificó -por cuatro a uno- la comisión del mismo, agregó el comunicado.

Uno de los magistrados opinó que se cometió "secuestro simple y no agravado", precisó. Si la Justicia hubiese modificado la modalidad de secuestro agravado a simple, Fujimori habría podido acogerse a



El ex presidente peruano Alberto Fujimori durante el último juicio en su contra en Lima.

beneficios penitenciarios. Gorriti fue secuestrado un día después del autogolpe

del 5 de abril de 1992 por efectivos militares que lo encerraron en el sótano del

Servicio de Inteligencia del Ejército. □

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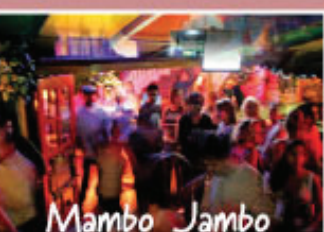
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